

THE FIRST PLACE

the first place i lived in was an apartment building in jersey, on the top floor, having two bedrooms, one which was shared by me and my two sisters. out back of a long row of garages was a cemetery, and of the handful of places i used to play in, this was the one i most frequented. my best friend was a girl named cookie, who had freckles and long wavy blonde hair, and who used to take me out amongst the gravestones where we would play our games of endless imagination. and i remember too, that there was one particular gravestone which had water streaming out from underneath it.

this i remember very clearly.

i was only about four at the time, but amazement overcame me when i saw this, and i stared at it as though it were a miracle, and most likely at the time i'm sure it brought me to a higher state of awareness.

i think cookie was also the first member of the opposite sex, outside of my mother, of course, whom i felt strongly drawn to.

i'd follow her anywhere. in her cellar she had a hospital set up, tiny boxes of insects which for one reason or another were in need of medical attention. there was a bee once. what exactly was wrong with this bee i cannot recall now, but i can see cookie leaning over it, in its bed made out of a small matchbox, or some such small wooden container.

she was also with me the day i learned how to swing on the swing. all of a sudden it came to me, how the swing worked, and this, like the water streaming out from underneath the gravestone, was a miracle.

my mother had been watching me from out of the kitchen window, causing me to feel extra proud, finding great joy in having shown her what

a wondrous thing i was capable of.

my father used to fly paper planes

out of the same kitchen window

when he'd come home for lunch

on workdays. we'd chase them

with wild enthusiasm, and they'd be

the most fantastic objects.

whenever he needed flowers for

some special occasion he'd

collect them from the grave sites.

for years he laughed about this.

but always he hated to talk

about death.